Edmonton continues to see solid employment gains

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Employment in the Edmonton region has increased for the third month in a row. Employment increased by approximately 6,400 positions in the Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) with gains largely in part-time employment. Employment gains in Edmonton were concentrated in manufacturing, trade, health care and education.

The unemployment rate also increased from 8.3% in February 2017 to 8.4% in March 2017. This was the result of about 8,100 individuals entering the region's active labour force. March's increases were concentrated in financial services, retail and professional services sectors. Employment fell in the construction, public administration and energy.

The unemployment rate for Calgary in February 2017 was 9.3% in March down marginally from 9.4% in February.

Labour Force Survey Results – Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area

Three-month moving average – seasonally adjusted

	Mar 2016	Feb 2017	**Mar 2017**	Feb 2017 to Mar 2017	Mar 2016 to Mar 2017	Feb 2017 to Mar 2017	Mar 2016 to Mar 2017
	(000)	(000)	**(000)**	(000)	(000)	%	%
Population (15 years and older)	1115.4	1129.6	**1131.1**	1.5	15.7	0.1	1.4
Labour force	838.7	818.4	**826.5**	8.1	-12.2	1.0	-1.5
Employment	779.7	750.3	**756.7**	6.4	-23.0	09	-2.9
Unemployment	59.0	68.2	**69.8**	1.6	10.8	2.3	18.3
Unemployment rate (%)	7.0	8.3	**8.4**	0.1	1.4	...	...
Participation rate (%)	75.2	72.5	**73.1**	0.6	-2.1	...	...
Employment rate (%)	69.9	66.4	**66.4**	0.5	-3.0	...	...

Source: Statistics Canada

Employment in Alberta was up in March 2017 with a gain of 20,000 full time jobs and minimal changes to part-time positions.

Alberta's unemployment rate rose from 8.3% to 8.4% as the number of people searching for work rose during the March 2017. Canada's overall employment was up with the addition of 19,400 positions. Most of Canada's job gains were in manufacturing, business services and retail and wholesale trade. However, the number of individuals seeking work in Canada rose steeply in March. As a result, Canada's unemployment rate was up slightly at 6.7% in March 2017 compared to 6.6% in February of 2017.

Significance

While there are signs that the Edmonton labour market is improving, Edmonton's recent job losses in the goods producing sector suggests that the region is not immune to the impact of decreased oil prices. As well, gains in part-time employment indicate that employers remain cautious in hiring.

Over the first half of 2017, employment in Edmonton will continue to grow in the manufacturing and professional services. However, the unemployment rate will continue to rise up to 8.5% as the local labour force expands.

Growth in the working age population, up 1.4% from March 2016 March 2017, has been an important factor in moderating wage increases. This is done by addressing labour and skill shortages that began to emerge in Edmonton prior to the downturn in energy prices. With Edmonton's unemployment rate at 8.4% partnered with job gains across Canada, net migration into the region has slowed down, especially when compared to the volumes seen over the past several years. This will slow the growth in the working age population over the course of 2017.

Limitations

Since employment trends, particularly in the full-time category, tend to lag behind developments in overall economic activity, they are a better indicator of past, rather than current, conditions in the economy. However, employment trends are useful predictors of future changes in incomes and consumer spending. Statistics Canada publishes a three-month moving average of all labour force values for the Edmonton region, an approach that sometimes results in the number of reported jobs lagging behind developments in the Edmonton region's economy.

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